FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE BEAUTY OF THESE GENTLE VOICES. THE ONLY THING TO SAY IS 'THESE MEN LOVE GOD.'

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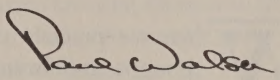
In 1932, Dr. Carl G. Jung, one of the chief founders of modern psychiatry, wrote:

> "Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty-five—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook. This, of course, has nothing whatever to do with a particular creed or membership in a church."

In the first half of life, Jung pointed out, a young person occupies him or herself almost exclusively with the external tasks and goals of worldly success, raising a family, and winning a place in society. All this is as it should be. The morning of life is the time for outward expansion. But there is a penalty attached to this kind of achievement. By limiting ourselves to what is attainable in the outer world, we run the danger of seriously stunting our potential for spiritual growth. As a result, most of us enter the second half of life ill-prepared for what it will bring—and what it will take away. "We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the programme of life's morning," Jung tells us. "For what was great in the morning will be little at evening." The important question is no longer "What can I accomplish?" but "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "What is life—my life—all about?" The second half of life demands of us that we journey inward to seek the meaning and truth of our existence. Unfortunately, for many, the traditional formulations of religion have lost their vitality and their ability to help us with our search for answers. The manifestations of the divine spirit, however, are as wondrous and varied as creation itself, and men and women everywhere continue to find through prayer and meditation the help they seek.

It is the hope of Fellowship in Prayer that this publication will help you in *your* search for ways to draw closer to the divine source and end of all being. I have found, well into the second half of my own life, that the experiences of others are a vital source of instruction and encouragement as I pursue my own inward journey. I hope that you, especially if you are in the second half of life, will find in these pages inspiration and

guidance that will aid you in your efforts to approach the ultimate mystery. Would you write and let me know how it goes with you?



Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.

Becoming Free

When we practice contemplative prayer or meditation our thoughts and feelings, our memories and sensations float easily by like clouds. We become free of them by simply watching them come and go, by observing them move on and disappear. This simple process of stilling the mind by letting-go is the way to the highest freedom there is. As the images of our past go by and wander off, our inner space empties, and we become clear and light like a bright blue sky free of clouds. The Spanish mystic, Saint John of the Cross, once counseled: "to have pleasure in everything seek pleasure in nothing. To know everything seek to know nothing. To possess all things seek to possess nothing." By this he meant, "seek God." Do not desire or strive for anything but God. Undertake the self-emptying path to become free of everything except the presence that shines within you and everywhere.

In every religion freedom has two aspects, "freedom from" and "freedom for." "Freedom from" refers to the inner burdens released in prayer. "Freedom for" pertains to the higher purpose, the natural outcome of prayer. A spiritual practice extends far beyond the experience of what the East calls "emptiness" and the West calls "union with God." Because prayer frees us from all kinds of blocks, all kinds of suffering, it enables natural, innate human charity to arise. Prayer leads spontaneously to compassion, to love felt and willed toward other people and the world, to the caring that gives it's all to the nearest task at hand. When Dante wrote in *The Divine Comedy* of "the love that moves the sun and stars" he had in mind the outgoing and inherently dynamic energy that motivates the spirit of women and men to turn outward in self-transcending yet self-expressing activity.

An essential part of becoming free is leading an ethical life. A 17-year-old says no to crack. An executive refuses to take part in office politics. A celibate priest resists the temptation to break his vow. Every moment of moral restraint makes us more free, because it implies a moral "yes" that draws us closer to God. Here the East's concern with "defilements," the West's with "sin" come together in absolute agreement that immorality and freedom relate as opposites: a guilty conscience obstructs our view

and keeps out the Light, a clear conscience opens a vision onto the Infinite.

The liberty of the spirit arrives in small packages, one at a time and less often than we wish, but it is part of the divine law that those who follow the spiritual path of detachment and moral choice do become more free. Wisdom illuminates the soul; love liberates the heart.

The articles in this edition of *Fellowship In Prayer* have three suggestions for those intent on becoming more free: more moments spent in prayer and meditation; greater practice of values; more love put into relationships. This is the only way toward "the truth that sets us free" and the luminous tranquillity of the spirit alive in God.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

From the bottom of your heart be content with not having, and then you will find the reward of poverty.
Mohammed

Sixty-six times have these eyes beheld the
changing scenes of autumn.
I have said enough about moonlight; ask me
no more.
Only listen to the voice of pines and cedars
when no wind stirs.
A Buddhist Nun

You live in illusion and the appearance of things. There is a Reality. You are the Reality. When you understand this, you will see that you are nothing. And being nothing, you are everything. That is all.
Kalu Rinpoche

The first factor of enlightenment is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the quality of noticing, of being aware of what's happening in the moment, not allowing the mind to be forgetful. The Buddha said he knew of no other factor which was as powerful as mindfulness for the cultivation of wholesome states of mind and the diminishing of unwholesome ones. There is nothing special we have to do to eliminate unskillful states or to make skillful ones happen, except to be aware of the moment. Awareness itself is the purifying force.
Joseph Goldstein

The absence of the desire for things produces emptiness and liberty of soul, even when there is an abundance of possessions.
St. John of the Cross

Never am I less alone than when I am by myself, never am I more active than when I do nothing.
Hannah Arendt

The Cantor's Message

MICHAEL WEISSER

Poetic power and spiritual beauty emanate from this gentle description of a deeply felt moment with God. As clouds and cares and noise dissipated one night, and the world became bathed with light, this writer experienced the full freedom that prayerful silence brings to life.

One evening I took a walk in my neighborhood. It was dark. It was quiet. The stars filled the sky and I could clearly see Orion and the two Ursas. The moon was less than a quarter moon. I heard the rustle of something moving in the woods off to my right, and the sound of something alive in nature only enhanced the feeling I had. I knew that I was in God's creation; I knew that I was a part of God's creation, and that I and all of creation were somehow in harmony. I stopped in the darkness between the streetlamps, and I looked up at the sky. Was I searching for some evidence of the presence of God? Perhaps, because at the moments when I feel the presence of God most strongly, I also feel the need to prove that the presence of God is real and not just the working of my imagination. "Are You there?" I asked aloud. "Show me that You are there."

As if in answer to my question (to my prayer) the cloud that had covered the nearly quarter moon drifted away and the world was bathed in an eerie light for several moments. The noises of the woods, the traffic noises, which I hadn't really noticed before, ceased so suddenly that I became aware that they were gone. The world was as silent as the world could be, and I felt that I was alone with God. "Help me to understand my place in the world," I said. "Give me the wisdom to lead Your people closer to You."

I felt that I was transformed for a moment from the ordinary to the holy, and I heard, deep within myself, the words: "Teach them to pray. Teach them to pray." Was it a message from God? Was it a message from my own inner being? Was it the longing of my own heart? Or was it the desire of the Lord our God?

I pray that we will all learn to open our hearts to the gift of prayer,

Tom Dunham

and that we will find our quiet moments as we walk outside or sit in our homes or when we are in the synagogue. I pray that the Lord will make Himself known to each of us, and that we will each make ourselves known to the Lord.

The words of the Psalmist come to me now: "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." Call upon him now.

You Must Not Remain Indifferent

RABBI JAN BRESKY

In Deuteronomy 22 we find three deceptively simple laws.

"If you see your neighbor's mule or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it, you must raise it." (Deut 22:4.)

". . . you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground with fledglings or eggs and the mother is sitting (on them), do not take the mother together with her young." (Deut 22:6.)

"You shall not plow with an ox and a mule together." (Deut 22:10.)

Why is the Torah concerned with what seem to be such petty matters? The answer is in verse three of the same chapter. You must not remain indifferent. In other words, in matters large and small, we are commanded to show compassion! Compassion to a sick mule, compassion to an overworked mule (the ox would not pull equally), even compassion to a mother bird nursing her young.

Why does God have to command us to show compassion? Isn't it natural for us to love one another and all living beings?

No.

We live in an incredibly uncaring and cruel age. We live at a time people seem unconcerned for themselves or others. We live in an age where life is cheap and love sparse.

The examples are many:

—On a recent talk show, I heard someone say we ought to "brand" AIDS patients;

—At a major Tampa city club, a speaker suggested that we are wasting our money trying to feed hungry people in Ethiopia;

—Major corporations hire and fire people with little or no regard for their personal lives;

—Even in our day to day activities, speaking to our family, listening to our friends, conducting our business, the concept of compassion is missing.

Deuteronomy 22 reminds us that if we wish to be religious people, holy people, then we must demonstrate compassion. Indeed it is not just a nice thought, it is a commandment. God commands us to care!

God loves us and has compassion on us. "Comfort, oh comfort My people, says your God, Speak tenderly to Jerusalem." (Isaiah 40:1-2.) "He gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent." (Isaiah 40:29.)

If God loves us so much, and has so much compassion for us, why doesn't God care when we are suffering? Moreover, why does God allow suffering? Suffering and pain do not mean that God doesn't care. Suffering and pain do not mean that God does not love you.

Then why? Why do bad things happen to good people? I don't know. However, I believe in my heart we suffer because it is necessary. I am sure of one thing; our suffering does not alleviate God's love, compassion or concern for us. God's promise of love is eternal. God's compassion is everlasting. It is beyond right now. It surpasses death. God's promise to us is forever.

But Rabbi, why should I show compassion when no one else does? I can't change the world.

True. You cannot change the whole world, but you can change yourself and you can come to see the world change. "You must not remain indifferent."

If you are indifferent—if you do not care—then you are spiritually dead!

You know the message: God is Real. Prayer is the vehicle to God. We must practice love, tolerance and non-harm.

But the message cannot work in your life, change your being, until you develop compassion. God commands: "You must care!"

One Secret of Prayer

ATUM THOMAS O'KANE

Here liberating insight is the result of thwarted plans, suggesting that the Spirit uses surprises to transform frustration into freedom.

I had intended to interview Abdul Aziz Said, Professor of International Relations, Director of the Center for Global Development and Sufi teacher. During lunch, I was warmed by the radiance of his expansive heart and later, we returned to his office where I proceeded to set up my tape recorder for the interview. Much to my surprise and some embarrassment, the machine did not work. I was amazed because before leaving for the meeting I had repeatedly tested the equipment.

Professor Said, for his part, sat patiently, occasionally offering some technical advice and assistance. When it became evident that we could not fix the machine, he suggested we take a walk. As we strolled through the sunlit campus of American University, the ease of his gait gradually subdued my frustration. Finally, we arrived at a building which he invited me to enter, and with deep appreciation he related the history of this interfaith place of worship. We sat together in silence. After some moments he took my hand and began to recite the Islamic noon day prayers.

My normal response would have been to join him, while feeling awkward as I stumbled over the Arabic words. As an Irish-American raised in the Christian tradition, my tongue still hasn't captured the finesse of inflection which conveys the beauty of this sacred language. However, I could not move out of the silence. As I listened to his voice with my heart the words were liberated from their conceptual meaning and they became sheer music to my soul. The greatest revelation came in the spaces between the phrases of the prayers. The emotion conveyed

Thomas O'Kane is Secretary General of the Sufi Order and a graduate of the Guild for Spiritual Guidance which integrates the psychology of Carl Jung, the mystical vision of Teihard De Chardin and the art of spiritual guidance as practiced by the Christian contemplatives. Atum holds a doctorate in Transpersonal Psychology.

through the quality of Professor Said's sighs stirred the depths of my being.

In his initial sighs I heard the unburdening of the heart, the releasing of the day's frustrations, and the surfacing of emotions that are thwarted by the demands of a busy life. Professor Said does not shy away from the pain of the world. Many, sensing his openness, seek comfort in his listening heart. In his sighs one could hear the fragments of their suffering and disappointments now being shared with God.

The next round of sighs exalted his heart as Professor Said found renewal in the contemplation of the grandeur of God. His was a heart breaking at the seams with a bounty of blessings. The prayers found their natural completion in the sighs of a deeply satisfying peace. Upon leaving the place of worship I was wondering why I had to wait until the age of forty-two to discover that the secret of prayer is not in the words, but in the sighs. Had not Christ warned against the vain repetitions of words, a heartless prayer?

I have heard Professor Said comment that when he is in the West his mind is full but his heart is starved, and when he is in the East his mind is starved but his heart is overflowing. While teaching our children how to pray we would be wise to help them remember that prayer satisfies the hunger of the heart and the sighs are as important as the words.

How Do You Pray?

CHARLES CUMMINGS, O.C.S.O.

A Trappist monk brings to the reader a living picture of prayer inside a monastery, where undisturbed silence liberates men from all that normally separates us from god.

People who visit Trappist monasteries sometimes ask one of the monks, "How do you pray?" Our visitors know that we gather frequently in church to chant the Psalms but they want to know what goes on during the long pauses for silent prayer. Do the monks use secret methods that lead them quickly into contemplation? Do they speak with God and receive messages?

Without claiming to speak for other monks, I will attempt to describe what goes on when I pray in silence. There is nothing secret about monastic ways of prayer, though prayer is an intensely personal occupation. Jesus advised: "When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." (Mt. 6:6.)

What happens in silent prayer? A striking verse in the New Testament letter of St. James says, "Draw near to God and God will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). I know that this drawing near takes place whenever I pray, though I seldom feel the nearness of God; even when I feel only the absence of God, I believe in the nearness.

Prayer is less a matter of feeling than of believing. To pray is to move with steps of faith, hope and love into nearness to God our Creator, Redeemer, and Consoler, who has fashioned us in the divine image and invites us into loving intimacy. To pray is to say yes to God's constant, caring presence which may be unfelt but which envelopes, penetrates, and sustains us every moment of our life whether we are aware of it or not. When I pray I try to become aware of God's nearness.

How does silent prayer begin? Whenever I turn to God I have already begun to pray. Desiring to pray is the essence of it. That is why everyone

Fr. Cummings is a Cistercian monk of the Strict Observance (Trappist), at Holy Trinity Abbey in Huntsville, Utah.

can pray who really wants to pray. If I notice my thoughts wandering away during a period of prayer,—and such distractions are inevitable—then I begin all over again by turning my mind and heart back to God. For me, prayer is a succession of these stops and starts. A life of prayer is a lifetime of beginning all over again.

St. Paul says, "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself comes to our aid" (Rom 8:26). We let the Holy Spirit come to our aid by turning ourselves over to God, trusting in God's unconditional acceptance, mercy and love. We do not have to do it all ourselves! The Spirit of God will do it in us and with us if we simply relax and let ourselves be led wherever it pleases the Spirit to lead us in prayer. I do not hear voices or receive messages during prayer, but I trust that the Spirit of God is always there with me and within me as my helper and guide.

I believe that the Spirit gradually leads us towards an ever simpler, more loving form of prayer. This deep, simple, loving attentiveness is often called contemplative prayer. Contemplation is a gaze of the heart directed towards the mystery of God, without words on the lips or thoughts in the mind. Contemplation is a quiet resting in the presence of God, as in the company of a friend who we know loves us. We can pray, and pray well, simply by dwelling in openness and receptivity to the divine mystery.

Are there techniques to prepare for contemplative prayer? The saints assure us that contemplative intimacy with God is sheer gift and cannot be produced by human effort. Nevertheless, there are techniques which can help put us in the best position to receive God's gift. For example, my preliminary preparation for contemplative prayer includes: 1) going to a quiet place, my room; 2) taking a sitting position which I can maintain comfortably for fifteen or twenty minutes without falling asleep; 3) briefly invoking God's help and offering this period of prayer for the greater glory of God.

For immediate preparation I borrow a technique based on *The Cloud of Unknowing*, by an anonymous English monk of the fourteenth century. This spiritual master suggests the gentle repetition of a sacred word as a focal point for centering one's attention on the nearness and allness of God. Sometimes called "centering prayer," this technique is similar to the use of a *mantra* or a *koan* in Eastern meditation practice but even more similar to the Jesus Prayer used in the Hesychast tradition of Christian spirituality.

Tom Dunham

I prefer to use a short word or phrase such as: Jesus-Mercy, Abba-Father, Spirit-Love, Maranatha (as in 1 Cor 16:22). I stay with the same word throughout the period. Usually I try to coordinate the syllables with an inhalation or exhalation. The need to breathe helps bring my attention back to prayer when my imagination attempts to run away

with me. I feel the world slowly drawing me into itself, inviting me to surrender and become one breath, one Spirit, with the divine mystery. Having done its work, the word may fade away, leaving me in a silence that is full of God's presence. Fervent repetition of the word is a technique which can be used or not used, for God is not in any technique.

What are the fruits of silent prayer? If my prayer has been deep, I usually bring an inner calmness and confidence to my next occupation. For a time I am more at peace in my heart. I feel the influence of my prayer when I face others more patiently, joyfully, lovingly. Similarly, the way I conduct myself outside of prayer periods will affect the quality of my prayer. As I live, so I pray, for my prayer is my self before God.

After many years of practice, I am convinced that fidelity to my schedule of prayer is extremely important. Whether I feel like praying or not, whether it seems to be a waste of time or not, I try to be faithful to my daily times for prayer. As in a relationship with a human friend, years of mutual fidelity may one day lead to a breakthrough; then everything shifts to a deeper level of intimacy. We never know where the life of prayer will take us. In this sense prayer is an adventure in which at any moment we may be in for a surprise. Remember, we are dealing with an infinitely mysterious, creative, alluring, desirable, trustworthy partner.

To seek and serve this God of delights is the most meaningful work of our life. Anyone who loves God wants instinctively to remain in God's presence, to celebrate time with God, to enjoy God. And God wants exactly the same thing! Jesus told us what we can expect: "Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him or her, and we shall come and make our home with him or her" (Jn 14:23).

There are many avenues to silent, contemplative prayer. The one that is best for me is not necessarily best for the next person. One's form of prayer has to fit like a comfortable shoe. There is a form of prayer that fits each person and each stage of life. As we mature spiritually, we can expect our prayer to change, just as a friendship ripens as the partners grow to know each other more profoundly. The crucial thing is to nourish the friendship, be faithful to the prayer. "Pray constantly and never lose heart" (Lk 18:1).

Divine Interruptions

TRAVIS DUPRIEST

I've had it! I'm getting out of here. I've been here only four days, but that's enough for me.

I remember once my wife told me about a late English Renaissance play she was reading, "Enough's As Good as A Feast." Well, enough of this peace and quiet, enough of this monastery is more than a feast—it's too much. Too much holiness.

I don't mean too much of God. I'm not sure just how close we've even gotten yet. And I don't mean too much prayer: I like the offices, the Psalms; I don't really mind repeating the seasonal and daily collects the way they do.

I love the silence, so it isn't that really. The brothers all look kindly, and I really like the food, the work I do to help out, and the strolls around the monastery and the grounds.

I don't guess it's really even the holiness that I've got too much of. It's, well, it's that I'm not getting done what I came to do.

Oh, I'm getting plenty done—more than I bargained for. More than I could have asked or imagined as scripture puts it. I'm busy all the time. That's the problem.

Not with manual labor, not with monastic work. No, these brothers work hard, but they're not into the work ethic that I've encountered elsewhere.

The first monastery I even went to, at my priest-uncle's suggestion, was a Franciscan monastery in southern England. It was much as my wife and I expected—picturesquely located (in an old hunting lodge which had belonged to an earl at some point), kind brothers, very comfortable library, and excellent homemade bread. All the amenities you'd expect at an English religious house in an old hunting lodge.

Completely unexpected, though was the work. Not *that* we would work, but rather the kind of work I would do: clearing land.

First of all, aren't Franciscans supposed to live in towns or to work and wander about? They aren't supposed to be farmers like Benedictines or Cistercians, I thought. Well, these Franciscans were going to be; and

they, and their guests, were in the process of clearing acres of land of trees and stumps.

I rolled up my sleeves and worked. Worked like I've never worked before, sawing, axing, hauling. But that's not the worst place.

The worst place was the Presbyterian monastery we visited during Holy Week of that same year in Scotland. It is surely the most beautiful place I've ever been; to spend Holy Week there was a rich and wonderful blessing.

The abbey is beautifully restored and carefully loved and looked over by the Church of Scotland ministers and lay people who run it. We especially liked the vigil for world peace held each night in the abbey church.

But talk about work. Those Scottish Presbyterians love it. We helped prepare meals, washed up, cleaned all week long. We didn't mind all that much; we felt most fortunate to be able to stay at the abbey; it's just that work dominated. After our second or third day, my wife coined the term "monastic rat race," which has stuck with us throughout our marriage and signals those times when we've lost control of work and need to relax and have fun.

These monks are not workaholics. They're not overworking me in that sense. What's happening is that I keep having creative ideas for poems and meditations and homilies, and I'm not doing the work I packed up and brought here to do.

Today I even wondered if I shouldn't just give in to these thoughts and feelings, to my new found imagination. Felicitously, at tea this afternoon, I told the Abbot that "I'd had it." He said, "After just four days?" I said, "Yes, I'm not getting anything done except all these interesting poems and meditations."

Do you know what he said?

"Divine Interruptions."

ABBEY OF GETHSEMANI

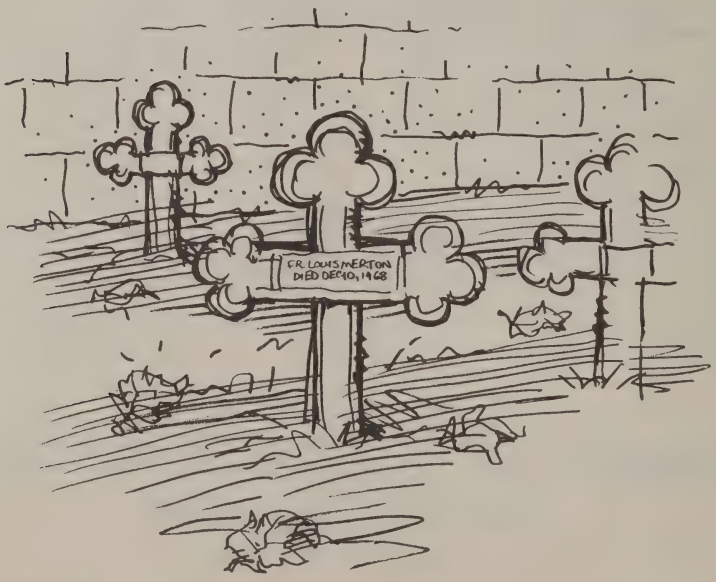
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

2/25/87 – 2/29/87

Internationally known for his political cartoons, Sandy Huffaker was nominated twice for a Pulitzer Prize. After a religious conversion experience, he gave up politics in favor of painting, through which he has had an experience of "total freedom."

AWESOME IS THE ONLY WORD FOR GETHSEMANI – THE MONASTIC HOME OF THOMAS MERTON. FEAR AND TREMBLING HIT FROM THE BARE IMMENSITY OF THE PLACE – ACRES OF SILOS AND SILENCE, A STONE MONUMENT TO THE DEATH OF WORLDLY ATTACHMENTS.

I ARRIVED SHORTLY AFTER NOON, AND NO HUMAN SEEMED TO INHABIT THIS FORBIDDING PLACE. WANDERING AROUND A BIT UNTIL SOMEONE MIGHT OPEN A DOOR, I STUMBLED ONTO MERTON'S GRAVE. AGAIN MY ANXIETY LEVEL ROSE – THIS GIANT OF A FIGURE RATED ONLY A CRUDE LITTLE CROSS LIKE ALL THE OTHER MONKS. THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION IS GIVEN HERE THAT ONE SHOULD LEAVE ONE'S EGO AT THE GATE!



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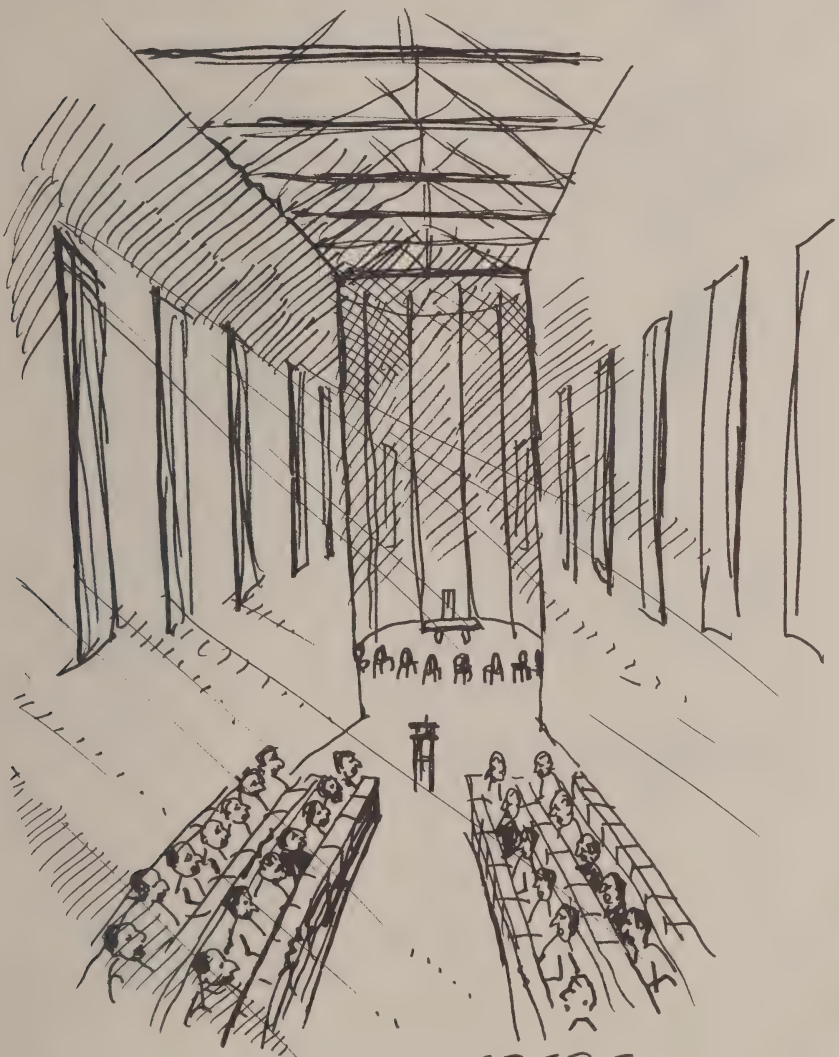

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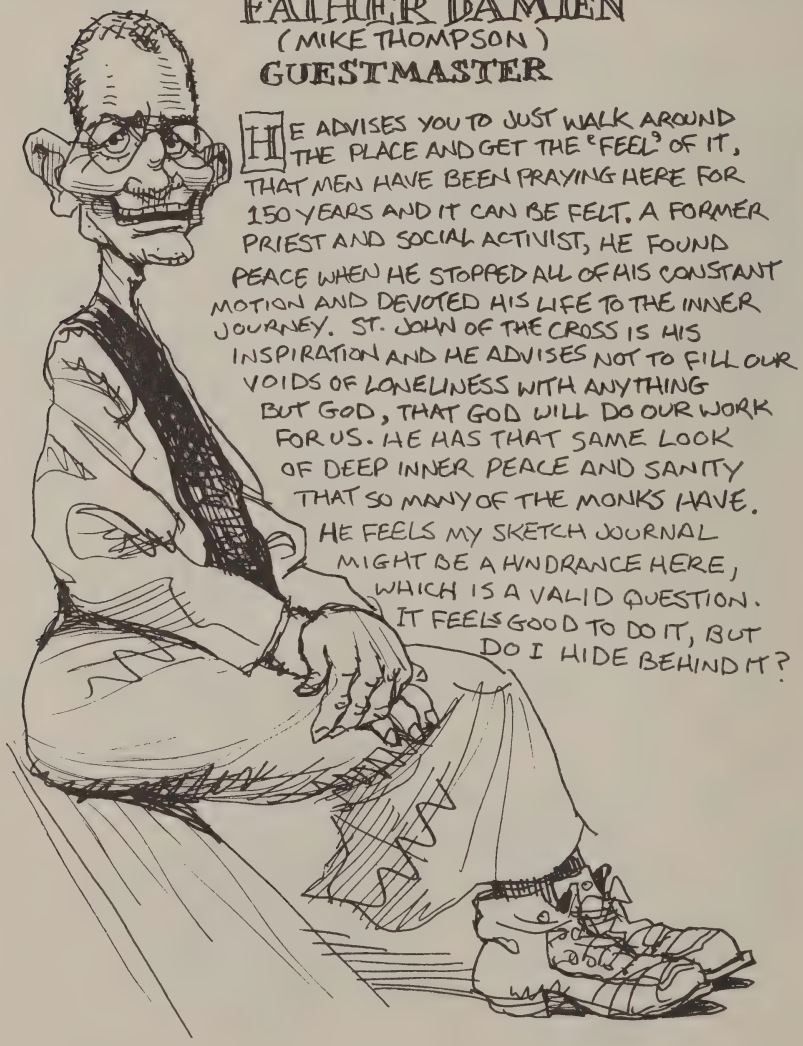
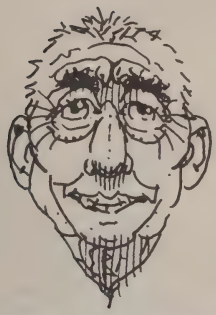


FATHER DAMIEN
(MIKE THOMPSON)
GUESTMASTER

HE ADVISES YOU TO JUST WALK AROUND THE PLACE AND GET THE 'FEEL' OF IT, THAT MEN HAVE BEEN PRAYING HERE FOR 150 YEARS AND IT CAN BE FELT. A FORMER PRIEST AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST, HE FOUND PEACE WHEN HE STOPPED ALL OF HIS CONSTANT MOTION AND DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE INNER JOURNEY. ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS IS HIS INSPIRATION AND HE ADVISES NOT TO FILL OUR VOIDS OF LONELINESS WITH ANYTHING BUT GOD, THAT GOD WILL DO OUR WORK FOR US. HE HAS THAT SAME LOOK OF DEEP INNER PEACE AND SANITY THAT SO MANY OF THE MONKS HAVE. HE FEELS MY SKETCH JOURNAL MIGHT BE A HINDRANCE HERE, WHICH IS A VALID QUESTION. IT FEELS GOOD TO DO IT, BUT DO I HIDE BEHIND IT?



FATHER MATTHEW KELTY

A MAN MANY PEOPLE COME HERE TO SEE. A FORMER MISSIONARY AND LATER HERMIT IN NEW GUINEA, HE IS THE THOMAS MERTON OF TODAY'S GETHSEMANI. I TELL HIM OF MY OWN COMPLETE EMPTINESS — MY CHILDREN (WHOM I WAS RAISING ALONE) BEING AWAY AT COLLEGE, LOSING THE WOMAN I LOVED AND QUITTING COMMERCIAL ART TO SEEK MORE MEANINGFUL EXPRESSION — AND HE HAD LITTLE FIRM ADVICE. I COULD ONLY GO BACK AND RE-READ A PASSAGE HE HAD WRITTEN IN A GETHSEMANI PAMPHLET: "OUR STRUGGLE SEEMS TO ENTER THE VERY REALM OF DEATH, BUT IN THE MIDST OF DEATH WE FIND, NOT DESTRUCTION, BUT LIFE AND TRANSFORMATION: "BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW (REV 21:5)."'

WE COME INTO THE WORLD ALONE AND
ATTEND US. MAN HAS AN INFINITE LON
THIS SEASHORE THE MONK OFTEN WALKS AN
OFTEN STANDS. AT SUCH TIMES HE DOES N
BUT HE LETS IT HAPPEN TO HIM. HE LETS IT

A COMMUNITY IN WHICH GENUINE LOVE F
THERE IS A GREAT LOVE FOR SOLITUDE, FOR
IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF GENUINE LOVE THAT
BEFORE GOD.

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from a letter by Paul Walsh, F.I.P. President

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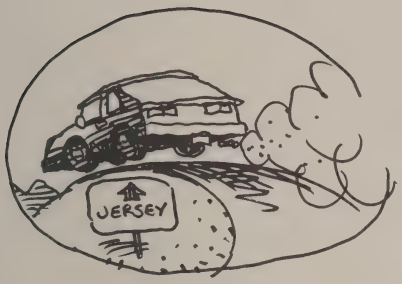
ELINESS, A LONELINESS WITHOUT MEASURE. ON
D PONDERS. UNDER THIS LONELY SKY HE
OTHING, FOR THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.
SINK IN.
LOURISHES WILL ALSO BE A COMMUNITY IN WHICH
THE REASON THAT ONE LEADS TO THE OTHER.
GIVES ONE THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE
ERY IS NO PLACE TO GO. IF YOU HATE THE
OU GET MOODY AND DEPRESSED, THIS WILL

— FATHER MATTHEW KELTY

A LONG TREK THROUGH THE BARE WOODS WITH FATHER MATTHEW TO THE CABIN MERTON USED WHEN HE BECAME A HERMIT IN HIS LAST 9 YEARS. MONKS NOW USE IT FOR FROM ONE DAY A WEEK TO ONE WEEK A YEAR. THE ROYALTIES FROM MERTON'S BOOKS COME TO ABOUT $40,000 A YEAR, WHICH SUPPLEMENTS THE MONASTERY'S INCOME FROM CHEESE AND FRUITCAKE. THERE ARE ABOUT 80 MONKS NOW, MANY OF THEM VERY OLD, ON 6,000 ACRES OF BREATH-TAKING LAND.

FATHER MATTHEW WAS MERTON'S CONFESSOR IN HIS LAST YEARS. THEY WERE BOTH IN AGREEMENT ON THE NECESSITY OF SOLITUDE.



IT HAS BEEN EXCRUCIATINGLY PAINFUL BEING HERE, FACING MYSELF WITH NO "PROPS", NAKED AND ALONE — BUT SOMETHING DEEP INSIDE SAYS IT WAS WORTH IT, THAT I FACED THE TRUTH. FATHER MATTHEW, SPEAKING OF MERTON WROTE IT BEST: "FATHER LOUIS BELIEVED THAT SOLITUDE WAS ESSENTIAL. HE SENSED THAT THE DISCIPLINE INVOLVED IN EXPOSING SELF TO REALITY COULD FIRST OF ALL ONLY BE DONE ALONE; FURTHER, THAT IT RAN NO RISK OF DEVELOPING AN EGO; THAT IT WOULD LEAD ONE TO AN EXPERIENCE OF ONE'S OWN POVERTY AND SINFULNESS AND THUS TO A REALIZATION OF GOD'S MERCY; AND, THENCE, TO A COMPASSIONATE LOVE FOR MAN. BUT IF THIS INNER JOURNEY IS NOT MADE, ONE'S GRASP OF ONE'S OWN BEING MUST BE GRIEVOUSLY LIMITED, WITH THE CONSEQUENT WEAKENED RECOGNITION OF GOD'S MERCY. GENUINE LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR IS OF ONE KIND WITH LOVE FOR ONE'S SELF AND IS ROOTED IN REALITY."

Free Will Versus Free Won't

WILLIAM M. STEPHENS

When I was 15 or so, I discovered the works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, and a whole new world opened up to me. Life was intoxicating and free. But there was one problem. I couldn't fit God into the picture. Not a personal God anyway. God, if He existed, had to be the force that operates the cosmic clock and paints rainbows on the sky. How could such a God be concerned about me as an individual?

At the heart of my spiritual dilemma was the question of Free Will. Whether God exists or not, I reasoned, we are all caught up in the flow of time and at the mercy of cause and effect, "If God *does* exist," my mind said, "God made me what I am, and He alone must bear the responsibility for my flaws and failures. And if God does *not* exist, I have been made this way by my heredity and my environment, and I have no more control over those forces than I have over God."

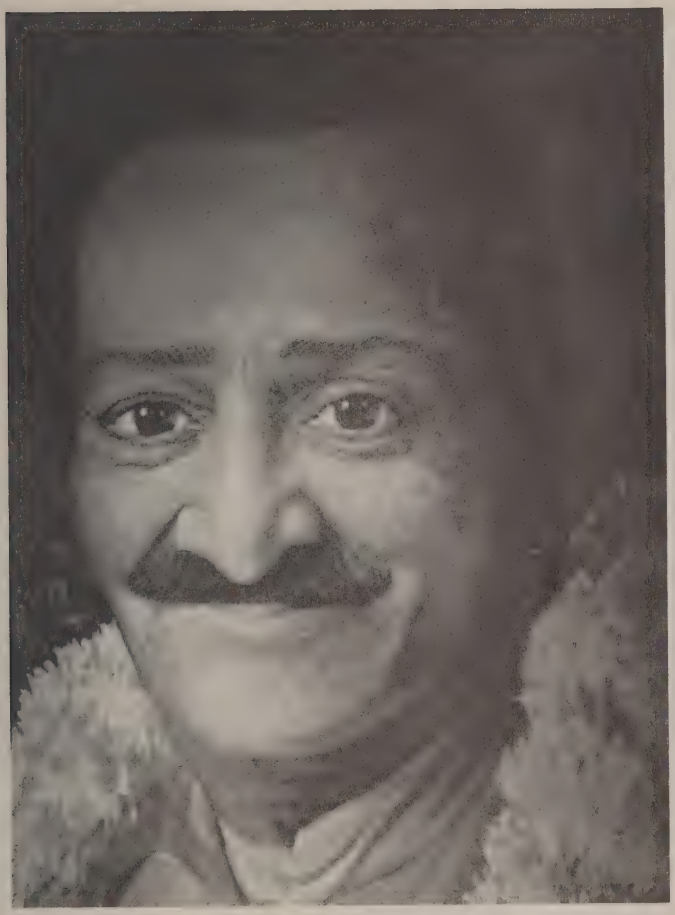
> No matter how enslaved we are by desires, we always have the freedom to surrender these desires to God, to the Lord of Love, who transmutes them and uses them. With each surrender, we grow closer to God, who is eternally free, and so we experience more and more freedom. And when we have totally surrendered, we are totally free.

Like all teen-agers, I took everything very seriously and personally, and I was infuriated by some of the things our minister said. If God is love, I felt, as the Bible says, how could God ever *think* of punishing me for mistakes He made in creating me?

On the other hand, if God does *not* exist, I kept thinking, what's the point of it all? Are we born only to die?

Pretty heady stuff for a 15-year-old to grapple with. And I grappled

A busy attorney and author who specializes in the teachings of Meher Baba, Bill Stephens is making a pilgrimage later this year to India, where he will meet with disciples of Meher Baba.



Meher Baba by Roger B. Stephens

with the same basic issue for 25 years as I muddled my way through life, swinging like a pendulum from pride in my skepticism to guilt, despair, and a sense of utter worthlessness. But finally, by the Grace of God, I was drawn into the orbit of Avatar Meher Baba, and my frozen heart began the painful process of melting in the sunlight of God's love. But that's another story.

I now believe that God never punishes anybody. We punish ourselves.

Everything we do or think or want leads to inevitable consequences. Karma. Action, reaction. The great universal feedback loop. But the Inventor, in infinite compassion, made allowances for fools and slow-learners like me. While karma seems inexorable, it is not mechanistic. God's Grace is always there, ever-flowing, and God's love is available to the lowest of the low as well as to the highest of the high. By surrendering our will to God, we obtain instant forgiveness.

As Meher Baba explains it, God goes about the external business of converting liabilities (sinners) into assets (saints).

So what about Free Will? Well, it seems to me that only God's will is completely free. Most of us are slaves to our desires, so how can we possibly demonstrate free will? The alcoholic or dope-addict will do anything in the world to satisfy an addiction. And we all have our addictions: for cigarets, chocolates, sex, power, position—the list is endless. To become free of our addictions, we must sublimate or re-direct them.

Instead of lusting for sensations of the flesh, we can direct our lust at God, and our lust is purified in His infinite ocean of love. It comes back to us as a great wave of love that we can utilize in all our relationships. It won't eliminate our human lust (at least, not right away, for all growth is gradual), but it raises it to a higher level. Meher Baba says that lust is simply the most primitive form of love, and it evolves into love. And human love evolves into divine love.

No matter how enslaved we are by desires, we always have the freedom to surrender those desires to God, to the Lord of Love, who transmutes them and uses them. With each surrender, we grow closer to God, who is eternally free, and so we experience more and more freedom. And when we have totally surrendered, we are totally free, because God is free. Liberation. Or, as they say in the East, *Mukti. Moksha.* The meaning of Meher Baba's motto: Mastery in Servitude. By exercising our free will to become God's slave, we achieve mastery over our own destiny.

Meher Baba's sister Mani, who lives in Meherazad, India, in the home where Baba spent his final days, says the issue is not free will at all. It's "free won't." We exercise our freedom to keep ourselves separate from God. We refuse to surrender. We won't. So the big choice we must make in life is: Will we or won't we?

The heart says, "I will."

Aids Ministry

KAREN JAENKE

Let me begin by saying that seemingly no one comes to AIDS ministry until forced to. Just the word "AIDS" evokes deep-seated fears, images of the untouchable, of contagion, of ugly dying, of shameful death. We don't set aside the denial and avoidance which is our natural first reaction until AIDS first confronts us. This is also true of the victims of AIDS, who push away its dark face until denial is no longer possible. We share with them a deep resistance to AIDS, and this horror must be faced if we are to be effective.

There is nothing new in AIDS ministry. It involves the same pastoral issues as other pastoral ministries—except it is all these issues combined into one: death and dying, isolation, sexuality, marginal lifestyles, bodily disfiguration, threat of mental deterioration, being stigmatized, rejection, job loss, loss of social status, loss of self-esteem. In a sense, to have AIDS is to experience one's humanity in the most intensely painful way possible; to be fully vulnerable on every side, without defense or immunity in a world of germs and fears.

It is also true that there is nothing new in AIDS ministry. It involves the same pastoral issues as other pastoral ministries—except it is all these issues combined in one: death and dying, isolation, sexuality, marginal lifestyles, bodily disfiguration, threat of mental deterioration, being stigmatized, rejection, job loss, loss of social status, loss of self-esteem. In a sense, to have AIDS is to experience one's humanity in the most intensely painful way possible; to be fully vulnerable on every side, without defense or immunity, in a world of germs and fears. It is the combination, the concentration, of so many difficult faces of being human which makes this ministry unique.

The first thing to be confronted is one's own fear. One must move beyond the half-truths and hysteria-inducing reports of the media and

get the medical facts. In the beginning, one must constantly re-indoctrinate oneself with this body of facts. One reason having the facts and eliminating fears is so essential is that persons with AIDS (PWAs) are highly sensitive to even subtle reminders which suggest fear has erected a human barrier. Even the wearing of an unnecessary mask or glove communicates a barrier of fear and reinforces the isolation of the AIDS patient. "Perfect love casts out fear." For us, this means being willing to get the medical facts and then to embark on a journey in which we expect to have our demonic fears cast out by something much greater, which we call perfect love.

The second thing AIDS confronts us with is an enormous sense of helplessness. Most of us are result-oriented, like to see tangibles, need external confirmation. AIDS gives very little of that. We have been taught to be healers, and that our technology saves. We have believed that we nearly conquered death, and that plagues are a thing of the past. All these illusions must be painfully surrendered to the AIDS virus. AIDS will kill; it will kill the young; the otherwise vibrant; the fighters and survivors; the ones we especially like and grow attached to. In the background, there is always the hope that our theology, or our preaching, or our compassion, or our counseling will somehow stem the tide of this deadly virus. But if one is to endure in this ministry, it must be grounded on some other basis, some less grandiose basis.

For me, this basis is presence. I refer to an accepting presence, also called unconditional love. All the pastoral literature on AIDS points to this—the non-judgmental compassion embodied in Jesus' ministry. These are familiar ideas, yet the quality of this presence must be genuine. There are two sides to offering this presence, an "active" side and a "barrier" side.

The "active" side essentially involves listening. AIDS ministry is primarily a listening, not a preaching ministry. This is so because one of the main ways to convey acceptance, or unconditional love, is through listening. In the words of Morton Kelsey, "Before there can be any real love, one must find out what the other person is like. One has to become aware, conscious of the person's true being, in order to love that very person and not some image of one's own that one projects upon the other. . . . And probably the surest way of finding out the difference is by listening to the other person, allowing oneself to be open and sensitive to that person's real reactions."

Cliff Moore

There are also within us two "barriers" to offering this kind of presence. One is our tendency to be judgmental. Judgmentalism is actually a defense mechanism, which protects the judger from the other, who is viewed as inferior or disgusting. The need to judge arises from one's own sense of insecurity of inadequacy. It serves to create distance between self and other, and sends a clear message of rejection. Because PWAs tend to divide their world very quickly into those who accept and those who reject, as a means of coping with chronic rejection, if we are ever found in their rejecting column, we have lost our capacity for effectiveness.

A second barrier to presence is anger. AIDS generates enormous rage. To step into AIDS ministry is to step into an arena of hostility. This anger comes both from non-victims of AIDS, who often believe PWAs are not deserving of your time, efforts or compassion, and from PWAs,

who are facing an endless series of losses. It becomes important to know, and constantly remind oneself through self-talk, that the anger generated by the disease is natural and to be expected. We must give the signal of being "okay" with anger, with an assurance the relationship will not be broken off if too much anger is expressed. The anger is often irrationally displaced onto other things, other people, including the chaplain, and petty events—but seldom at the disease itself. It is vital not to internalize this anger or take it personally, or one will soon be devastated. The danger is that if the anger cannot be expressed and externalized, it will be internalized—a sure factor in the progression of the disease. Providing a safe place to vent anger is especially critical in the institutions, where expressing anger carries so many punitive risks.

If we are able to remain non-judgmental, and sit with the anger, if in these ways PWAs experience us as trustworthy and feel acceptance, then they may begin to tell their story. Here we often discover the early disappointments, pains and failures which led to basic life decisions and lifestyle choices, which may have ultimately led to contracting the AIDS virus. What it means to work through the past is unique for each person, but this yearning to make peace with the past is both deep-seated and instinctive. The chaplain need not impose this agenda, but really just be alert for it. Here I am referring to the sharing of those innermost agonies, perhaps stories of abuse, incest or crimes—the taboo subjects that are wrapped in shame. Of this Kubler-Ross says: "It became very clear over these last years, working with healthy people as well as terminally ill patients, that our only enemies are guilt, fear and shame. (These) prevent us from living fully and deplete us of so much energy." The hope is that the individual can resolve these negativities, and find a state of inner peace. The privilege of sharing in this process is one of the great joys of AIDS ministry.

The Universal Prayer of Meher Baba

O Parvardigar, the Preserver and Protector of All,
You are without beginning and without end;
Nondual, beyond comparison, and none can measure You.
You are without color, without expression, without form, and without attributes.
You are unlimited and unfathomable, beyond imagination and conception, eternal and imperishable.
You are indivisible, and none can see You but with eyes divine.
You always were, You always are, and You always will be;
You are everywhere, You are in everything, and You are also beyond everywhere and beyond everything.
You are in the firmament and in the depths, You are manifest and unmanifest, on all planes and beyond all planes.
You are in the three worlds and also beyond the three worlds. You are imperceptible and independent.
You are the Creator, the Lord of Lords, the Knower of all minds and hearts; You are omnipotent and omnipresent.
You are Knowledge Infinite, Power Infinite, and Bliss Infinite.
You are the Ocean of Knowledge, All-Knowing, Infinitely Knowing; the Knower of the past, the present, and the future; and You are Knowledge itself.
You are All-Merciful and eternally benevolent.
You are the Soul of souls, the One with infinite attributes.
You are the Trinity of Truth, Knowledge, and Bliss;
You are the Source of Truth, the Ocean of Love.
You are the Ancient One, the Highest of the High; You are Prabhu and Parameshwar; You are the Beyond-God and the Beyond-Beyond-God also; You are Parabrahma, Allah, Elahi, Yezdan, Ahuramazda, and God the Beloved.
You are named Ezad: the Only One worthy of worship.

Submitted by Kendra Crossen

Please send your favorite prayer typed, double spaced to the Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Prayer of Rabrindranath Tagore

Give me the supreme courage of love.
This is my prayer—
the courage to speak,
to do,
to suffer at thy will,
to leave all things
or to be left alone.
Strengthen me on errands of danger,
honor me with pain,
and help me climb
to that difficult mood
which sacrifices daily to thee.

Give me the supreme confidence of love.
This is my prayer—
the confidence that belongs
to life in death,
to victory in defeat,
to the power hidden in frailest beauty,
to that dignity in pain
which accepts hurt
but disdains to return it.

Submitted by Alice C. Mansfield

What My Baha'i Faith and Practice Mean to Me

CAM MAGUIRE

I would like to share some aspects of my spiritual journey of the past two years, for it has been a period marked by an unprecedented outpouring of God's bounty in my life. I must confess my powerlessness to convey the essence of these years at the outset, however. Not only is my subject intrinsically spiritual, a realm which the human mind can never encompass let alone verbalize, but also my evolution during these years proceeds not so much from my own thought, as far as I can tell, but from God's grace. I ask God's assistance that what needs to be said will be.

I was born and raised into a spiritually-minded, Episcopal family. I gradually developed a strong love for the Episcopal church, which persists to this day. My last year in college witnessed the apex of my commitment to this community. I was privileged to serve as Episcopal Fel-

Cam Maguire majored in chemistry and music at Stanford and is now a doctoral candidate in physics at Princeton University. After graduation, he plans to work in China "to better others' lives."

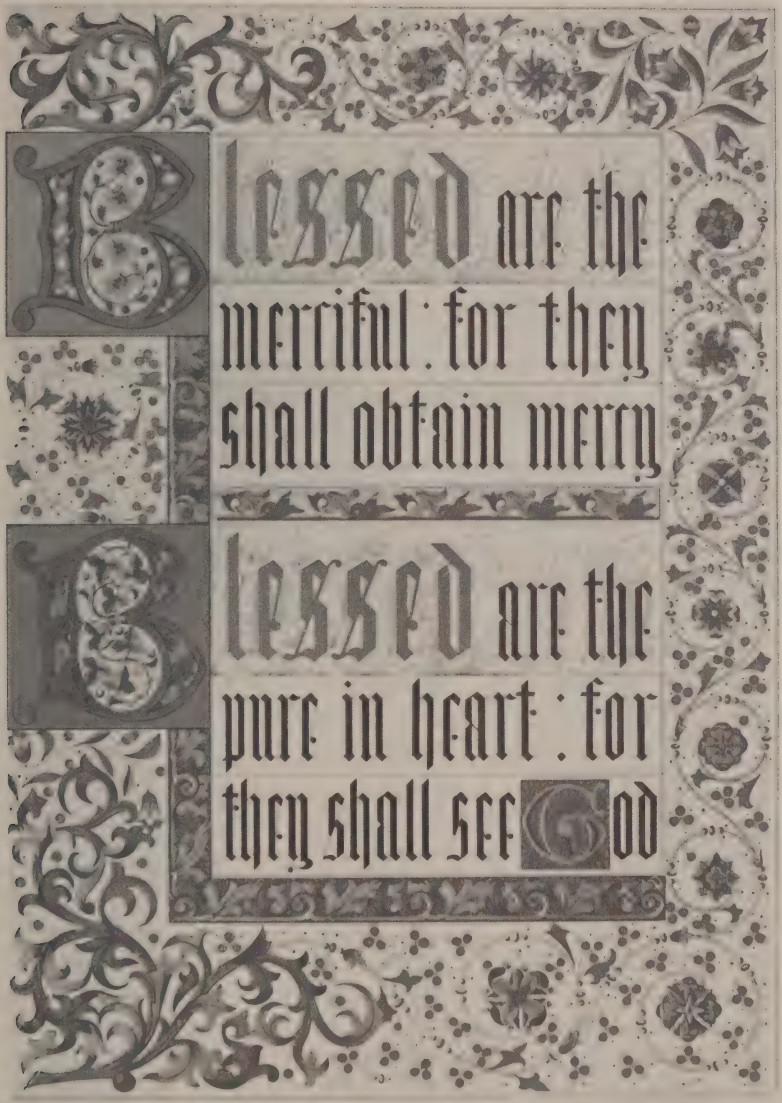
low for Stanford Canterbury, an office which carried responsibilities in outreach, organization, and fellowship.

After college, I was fortunate enough to begin graduate studies in physics at Princeton University. At the first dinner in the graduate dining room, I sat across the table from a first year student in English; as I later found out, the only Baha'i in the Graduate School.

We soon discovered we had a lot in common, especially in matters of faith. My new friend told me later that I had expressed most of the social principles of the Baha'i Faith during one of our discussions when I was attempting to explain some of the beliefs I held most dearly. And indeed, I found that Baha'is treasured many of the same concepts that bound me to the Episcopal Church; concepts such as the independent investigation of the truth (i.e. that one didn't accept faith blindly or without questions but should use reason and experience to challenge and strengthen faith); the inevitable harmony between science and religion; that the sexes were equal but not identical; the elimination of all forms of prejudice; the need for a global perspective on humanity; that it was one of the highest crimes and most twisted ironies that religion be the cause of bloodshed; and that one must respect others' beliefs. I didn't find this coincidence very meaningful at the time, however, for I believed these thoughts were so obvious that every individual was bound to accept them.

My response to the Baha'i faith at this point was to acknowledge that it was remarkably similar to the Episcopal faith, and therefore called for no particular changes on my part. However, in January of my first year, I learned that Baha'u'llah, Founder of the Baha'i Faith, claimed to fullfill Christ's promise to return (Baha'u'llah is Arabic for "The Glory of God"). When this sank in, I realized that I was in a precarious position. My Christian views clearly obligated me to investigate this claim. The emphasis Christ himself laid on "watching" for His return, "lest one walk naked, and they see his shame," rang too clearly in my ears. On the other hand, I trembled at Christ's warning of false prophets. Somehow I had to resolve the question before I could continue with any spiritual life. And the stakes were high: denying the Son of Man returned in the "Glory of His Father" on the one hand, being deceived by a false prophet on the other.

In the course of the following six months, I read more of the Bible than I had read in my life up to that point. I soon discovered shocking parallels between prophetic Scripture and Baha'i history. Although I be-



Paul M. Schrock

lieved that the primary value of the Gospels in proving the divinity of Christ lay in their spiritual, subjective, and metaphorical meanings, and although I had never consulted Old Testament prophecies to validate my belief in Christ, the realm of prophecy was a rather easy place to begin. I read a book called *The Thief in the Night*, which chronicled the author's search as a Christian into these questions. I was overwhelmed, especially by the fragments of Baha'i history in that book.

I then focussed on the deeper question of trying to determine whether the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Christian gospel had the same Source. I read the *Book of Certitude* by Baha'u'llah, in which He explains numerous passages of the world's Scriptures. Baha'u'llah taught that Revelation from God was progressive, that at various points in history God became manifest to us in a human body, with a message that was in part eternal and in part transitory. The eternal part unfolds more of the relationship between God and humanity and describes spiritual virtues, while the transitory part consists of social laws and norms that suit humankind's current stage of development. Hence, Baha'is believe in the divine origin of virtually all major world religions, but that revelation needs to be refreshed and changed periodically, both because men and women gradually distort God's Word by adding layers of interpretation and tradition over the years, and because humanity evolves and needs a different spiritual remedy for different ages. In *The Book of Certitude*, Baha'u'llah elaborates mostly on passages from Christian and Islamic Scriptures, although Baha'is acknowledge that many other, older faiths had a divine origin as well.

I was overwhelmed by the wisdom of the interpretations. The truths enshrined in that book were so clear, so simple and yet so exalted, that I couldn't help but be reminded of the message of Jesus' parables. I perused a similar book, *Some Answered Questions*, by 'Abdu'l-Baha (literally "the servant of the Glory"), who is roughly the Baha'i analog of Peter in the Christian Faith. This book discussed many Christian subjects, such as the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the station of Christ, as well as philosophical matters like predestination and free will. Again, to me the wisdom was staggering. It seemed as though all my tenuous intuitions and vague notions on these subjects were expounded clearly, in the light in which I was struggling to see them, and with ramifications and implications of which I had never conceived.

Finally, I read Baha'u'llah's *The Hidden Words*, a work of moral teach-

ings in concise verse. Here, in content, tone, authority, beauty, style and wisdom, the similarity with the Gospels was unmistakable. By mid March, I was convinced, although I postponed formally enrolling as a Baha'i to await a spiritual confirmation.

One such confirmation was to come shortly. I noticed in many Baha'is the same sincerity and conviction that I saw in my Baha'i friend at Princeton. Baha'is like non-Baha'is had their spiritual problems to face, but I found virtually no pretensions of facades. No one claimed to be holy, but everyone was clearly struggling in that direction. I noticed intense spiritual effort and motion, as well as periods of relaxation characterized by a euphoria I had seldom seen before. I found Baha'is united in a manner which defies explanation. In spite of personality clashes and differences of opinion, the goals were clear, as was the intent of every believer to uphold them. I found a genuine love for people which astounded me; it was marked by courtesy, interest, and always a robust sense of humor. I found an unaffected humility born of a full recognition of individual shortcomings, but also confidence in the power of faith to overcome them. I observed a vigorous, resilient community, eager to resolve challenging questions.

These qualities and more I saw in a visit to Green Acre Baha'i School in Maine. One day, after a prolonged session of private prayer, I became a Baha'i.

As to how these events have changed my life, it is perhaps best to end with a quotation from Baha'u'llah.

> This is the Day wheron the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men and women, the Day in which the Day-star of God's loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of God's bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of humankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity.

Praying for the People of the Soviet Union

MARY EVELYN JEGEN, S.N.D.

I want to suggest a simple exercise I discovered a few years ago. Although I write as a Christian, people of other faiths can draw upon their own understanding of prayer to practice this technique as well.

I came away from a prayer meeting resolved to spend time each day in prayer with a picture of a starving child in front of me. At first I felt foolish, sometimes restless. I resisted the temptation to grab a book, even for the Bible, during that time, however. I spent it with God and that child. The exercise was at first painful but later illuminating.

My suggestion for action to improve U.S.-Soviet relations is to find a picture of one or more persons from the Soviet Union. There are plenty in back issues of *National Geographic, Time, Fellowship, Newsweek,* or dozens of other magazines. I use a photograph of a five-year-old boy, Aloysha, and his three-year-old sister, Alexandra, who live in Moscow.

These two children now have a place in my heart, and I pray for them in a very explicit way. They are my brother and my sister. They are God's beloved children. Like me they have dreams and hopes, aches and pains, loves and fears, joys and sorrows.

If we use our weapons, against Russia, Aloysha and Alexandra would burn and bleed and die. The truth is that if I do not resist the warmaking psychology fostered by so many in our country, I am in some way implicated in the state of enmity existing between the United States and the Soviet Union.

So I must resist. But I must do more. I must stir up my faith by looking daily into the eyes of this little sister and brother, wanting to know more about them and their people, their way of life, their art, their literature.

I also want to express my love in practical ways. I pray for the Soviet people to have all they need, including international support for coping with the handicaps of their difficult geographical location. I find myself praying also for the Soviet Premier and the American President in a new way. I pray that they will take time to look deeply into each other's eyes

to discover the common fear of both peoples, and to take the risk of trust. I believe this can happen because I know the perfect love of God that casts out fear. I have learned it from my little brother and sister.

Are these glimmerings of a vision of active love foolish and impractical? Or are they part of a developing, new consciousness on which the security of our race depends? There is no better place to test this question than in prayer.

JUNE MOREAU

Psalm

When the Universe
dissolves in our eyes
and our souls
are as pollen in the wind.
May our bodies be bathed
in fragrant waters
and our hair be brushed
with silver burs from stars.

May we be reborn
in the forest chancel of white oak
amid the wing-songs
from a flight of quail.

I Opened The Door

I opened the door this morning
the whole sky came in
and fields of white clover.

I opened the door this noon
before me a mirror was woven
with threads of light.

Tonight I opened the door
the shadow of a tree wrapped around me
and the wind softened by dark leaves.

A member of the Radcliffe Seminars, June Moreau has had poems in Yankee, Phantasm, The Christian Science Monitor *and other publications. She makes her home in Lexington, MA.*

In July

I love the thunder oak
with its wreath of clouds.
at mid-morning the shadow
of its topmost branch
touches my pillow.

I love the song of the video
glossy bees browsing, dog
sleeping,
blackberries twinkling
and cornfields all tangled
with skeins of light.

I love the gnarled branches
of black cherry
plaited with ribbons of sky
and the blue shadows
of yellow butterflies
disappearing in tall grass.

I love the moon
spilling its light
on leaves of tupelo
and crickets furling
and unfurling
their tattered flags of song.

I love the ardent wind
in clusters of pine
luminous voices of a violin
and flurries of bats
singeing the air
with their wings.

I love the meadow
brimming with fireflies
and the way the stars
will never reveal
how I reached up
with deft hands
to rearrange them.

To the Editor:
Fellowship in Prayer is one of the most important and meaningful, spiritually oriented publications that I have been privileged to receive and read. I use each copy fully, drawing from the photography, poetry, the editorial, the spiritual insights, and the very fine articles which are so thoughtfully executed and so profoundly, yet simply written. I marvel at the complexity of thought that is embraced. I respect deeply the integrity and the honor of every person who contributes from so many different traditions to bring a perspective on the multi-dimensionality of prayer.

I am particularly moved by your profoundly meaningful emphasis on that which is referred to as the inner light, the eternal presence and the activity of God, which literally spills out from your pages month after month. It is a joy to know there is an organization, a group of men and women who are dedicated to contributing to a more united view from many different spiritual disciplines and approaches. Too long one view has been enhanced. It is time, I believe for a synthesis of views, a time in which peoples from many different religious persuasions can come together in a spiritual practice such as prayer or in public gatherings or places of worship where the Spirit of God can be worshiped, appreciated and honored without disrespect for labels but without emphasis on a specific identification or labeling.

I rejoice in the outstanding work you and all of your staff people are doing. Please extend my warm good wishes to all who labor, often without any acknowledgement except from those who are peers and those who are near them to do the Greater Work.

Rev. Leroy E. Zenke, President, Temple of the Living God
St. Petersburg, FL

Thank you for the beauty of *Fellowship in Prayer*.
Vincent Kavaloski, Director, Ecumenical Partnership for Peace and Justice
Dodgeville, WI

I enjoy your magazine on many levels of head and heart. In the February issue I was moved by many pieces of writing, particularly "The Divine Ordination of Women," "Our Desire for Space," and "How I Learned to Meditate." Let me share my heartfelt appreciation for the spirit of the articles and the excellent writing (form and content matching, which is rare).
Rick Edelstein-Matisse, The Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness
Los Angeles, CA

Having found a copy of your February, 1988 journal *Fellowship in Prayer* at Cenacle House in Rochester, I want to say how carefully crafted I found it to be. The variety is welcome: material that I can use for my own reflec-

tion, material that I can use with my congregation, material that I can use in Spiritual Direction.
Dr. James Hubbard, Rector, St. John's Episcopal Church
Canandaigua, NY

I have used *Fellowship in Prayer* with two large groups of Spiritual Directors who received it with great enthusiasm. We find *F.I.P.* most helpful in our work, in our own prayer, and as an enrichment to spirituality.
Ruth Cornwell, Ontario, Canada

As a recovering alcoholic, I gain much from *F.I.P.* Our meetings, like your magazine, encourage spiritual growth and openness.
Name Withheld, Laurel, MD

Your publication, *Fellowship in Prayer*, has been passed along to me. I would like to commend you on a delightful publication which will be routed around our office for everyone to enjoy.
Charles Bodmer, Tabor Publishing
Valencia, CA

I really feel blessed reading your magazine.
Sr. Iliana Valdes, Miami, FL

This is the most unique publication I've ever come across. My prayers are with you and this wonderful ministry.
Rika Spangler

I have just read my first issue of *Fellowship in Prayer*. Reading took quite a bit of time, due to my stopping often for reflection—and for tears. When I finally finished, I did so in the presence of the Lord. Your booklet made that possible!

My situation is somewhat unique. I am a prisoner at Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, serving time for a crime against the state. My selfishness and pride turned me from the Lord and from the religious truths taught to me long ago. The state I satisfy by being here. I'm working on making satisfaction to the Lord.

I've formed a prayer group here of men from different denominations, but united in their quest to learn more about God. Your booklet will be shared with these wounded men. We look for the kind of guidance that is possible from the prayers, articles and poems that *Fellowship in Prayer* offers. Their messages of love and hope-filled prayer will grow and flourish, like the mustard seed.
J.R., Pacific, MO

A. Menasche

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The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among humanity.

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, and sent to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. Please include a biography of no more than five lines.

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